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## The Imagery of Illusion

Nineteenth Century Magic and Deception  
In the Harvard Theatre Collection

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The Edward Sheldon Exhibition Rooms  
The Lamont Du Pont Copeland Gallery

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# The Imagery of Illusion

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To encapsulate a hundred years of conjuring performance into a single exhibition requires an imaginative corral. The task is made easier by the work of the artists and craftsmen who provided for their magician clients handbills, heralds, tickets, fan mounts, broadsides, sheet music, programs, photographs, and posters. The items in this exhibit yield a detailed, varied, and surprisingly comprehensive history of magic.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, both the illusion show and the advertising material used to herald its arrival changed dramatically. In the earlier decades, one might have seen a conjurer as a fairground performer barking for attention over myriad other attractions; appearing in the "commodious large room" of an assembly hall that was only half full; or commanding the single ring of a nascent circus — billed beneath the star horse. A grimly illuminated catacomb might provide the atmosphere for the projection of ghosts and demons known as phantasmagoria. The "Gift Show" was a mid-century innovation devised to fill a town hall by giving away prizes, and audiences may have attended in greater numbers for the hams, hats and turkeys than for a demonstration of supernatural skills. A tavern performance was still feasible at this time — but so was the chance to entertain at the White House. Lecture rooms bustled with demonstrations of spiritualism, and magicians threw down the gauntlet of exposure to these so-called other-worldly phenomena. The repertoire of the scientific demonstrator often included conjuring effects. Eventually the burgeoning field of vaudeville offered opportunities for an array of magical specialties. And by the end of the century a full evening's entertainment was presented by conjurers, the best of whom were hailed with the same enthusiasm as the stars of theater, dance, and opera.

All of these venues, great and small, required advertisement to lure a paying crowd, and this, as much as the performances themselves, is the object of our attention today. From the sober playbill with simple

type produced in 1800 to the magnificence of the full-color stone lithograph as the century came to a close, printers and designers focused their attention on filling the halls. Provocative images — bats and owls, and especially devils — proliferated, all seeking to make the public eager to broach the barrier, buy a ticket, and see what is, in the words of the carny, “on the inside.” Especially those pieces produced late in the century are rich in the imagery of magic, often significantly unlike what was delineated in the actual performance, and limited only by the artistic imagination.

In the early nineteenth century, the conjurer in England or America usually appeared at an assembly room, in a pub, or on a fairground in a makeshift booth. A formal theater setting was possible, but beyond the reach of most performers. The size and style of the handbills used to popularize these shows were concomitantly modest, letterpress affairs usually no larger than six by eight inches and without illustration. The printer’s skill was exemplified in the use and choice of type: classic Roman faces that seem subtle, almost subdued, in view of later embellishments. A crest or device might be added to the playbill, and an occasional woodcut greatly enhanced the overall appearance. In this early period, however, the appeal seems to have been almost completely verbal: hyperbolic, florid, orotund language describing provocative, seemingly impossible mysteries.

The representative playbills of Breslaw, Ingleby, and Gyngel, all well-known conjurers in their day, suggest the range of performances one could have attended in the early nineteenth century. The rodomontade that they spouted — especially Ingleby — was a throwback to the eighteenth-century magniloquence of such conjurers as the Frenchman Comus or the German Katterfelto, and it presaged the nifty neologisms of John Henry Anderson, perhaps the best-known illusionist of the mid-nineteenth century. Ingleby promised “Popoeromanso,” by which he “discovered the real thoughts of any person ... without asking a single Question,” and “Hiliodomactrics,” in which “The Performer will allow any person in the Room to break New Laid Eggs, and out of one of them he will produce ... A Recipe for the Cure of the Tooth-Ache which he wishes them not to expose, as he charges Five Guineas for the Recipe, and from the other [egg] A Complete Set of Child-Bed Linen, with the child.”<sup>1</sup>

The success and bombast of a performer like Ingleby invariably provoked imitation (in both conjuring effects and advertising gimmicks), sometimes in the legitimate form of parody, sometimes as illegitimate appropriation. In one delightful instance of the former, Billy Purvis, the beloved Newcastle Conjuror and clown, mimicked the immoderate Ingleby. Purvis was appearing at the Doncaster Races when Ingleby encroached on his territory. Being far better known than Purvis, and much more pompous, Ingleby appeared on stage "direct from the Theatre Coburg, London" in a rakish cocked hat, an expensive red coat bedizened with gold seals, black britches, silk stockings and other accouterments of wealth and fashion. He pompously declared himself the "Emperor of All Conjurors." Purvis swaggered across his own modest stage in a bedraggled red coat, beat-up hat, and false gold seals, introducing himself as "King of the Conjurors." Purvis aped his rival so skillfully that it reduced Ingleby's gross receipts, filled his own coffers, and established his reputation for years to come.

Gyngel was better known as a fairground impresario than as a magician. He did, however, include sleight of hand in a combined performance that featured all sorts of attractions associated with the mystical arts: automata, Chinese shadow theater, musical glasses, scientific experiments, learned animals, and even the exhibition of Simon Papp, the dwarf predecessor of Tom Thumb.

Ingleby's "Popoeromanso," which promised thought-reading without asking a single question, was itself taken verbatim (except for the outlandish title) from the repertoire of Breslaw. Probably born in Berlin in 1726, Breslaw was the elder statesman of the group, still going strong at the turn of the century, well into his seventies. His shows consisted of a combination of sleight of hand and mechanical apparatus. Among his effects were the conveyance of a coin from a gentleman's hand to a lady's pocket handkerchief; the discovery of a lady's wonted hour of rising (without asking questions); and renditions of many effects performed by the celebrated Italian Joseph Pinetti, such as borrowing a ring and making it dance in a goblet.<sup>2</sup>

1. In a bill from 1822, Ingleby divides the eggs more practically: the first contains the bed linen and the recipe for toothache, and the second, the child. See my *Jay's Journal of Anomalies*, vol. 4, no. 2, "Dental Deception," for more on the relationship of conjurers and dentists.



Early in his career Breslaw reportedly asked a churchwarden to supply complimentary accommodations for his performance, promising that he would give the receipts to the poor. After the show he said, "I have already disposed of dem — de profits were for de poor. I have kept my promise and given de money to my own people, who are de poorest in dis parish!"

"Sir," exclaimed the churchwarden, "this is a trick!"

Breslaw replied unabashedly, "I live by my tricks."<sup>3</sup>

Nineteenth-century venues included Green Brook fair, Portsdown Fair, and perhaps the best known, Bartholomew Fair. A glimpse of this renowned venue features the most famous magician of the day, Isaac Fawkes. The print is erroneously dated 1721 (it features the Siege of Gibraltar, which took place in 1727, and clothing styles that have been dated in the 1740's). It was executed by Thomas Loggon (the dwarf fan-painter of Tunbridge Wells) and not published until 1824, by Setchel. Accurate, however, is the depiction of a crowded thoroughfare of booths and stands. Peep shows, posture masters, acrobats, and actors compete for attention while spectators of all classes sample the shows, the wares of craftsmen, and a variety of comestibles. The carnival midway is the modern equivalent of this scenario, first established in the twelfth century. A lovely colored aquatint of Green Brook Fair features the booth of the conjurer Moritiz (although the artist apparently felt free to depict a theatrical production rather than the conjuring performance that Moritiz offered).<sup>4</sup>

The job printer focused not on the fairground but on the needs of his conjuring client, and took an increasingly active role in arranging shows. The printer often secured the halls, alerted prominent families in the community, served as bill-sticker for the advertising pieces, performed errands, and sold tickets. The printer was consulted on which halls to hire and when to perform, and what to charge for admission. Here are some examples from the correspondence of the

2. I have seen an obituary notice of 1803 for Breslaw, but some skeptical scholars think that there may have been two performers using the same name.
3. Cutting inserted in Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*, extra-illustrated, vol. 3, p. 123, Harvard Theatre Collection.
4. Frederick Marryat's novel *Peter Simple* (London, 1834) gives a colorful description of the Portsdown Fair and a glimpse into the booth of the conjurer Gynge.

various showmen to the venerable printing firm of J. Proctor in Hartlepool, England. The famous wizard Jacobs begs the printer to secure the appropriate hall and to let him know its name and address. One of the many performers calling himself Bosco sends playbills manufactured by another printing concern and asks to have them posted and distributed. Bernardo Eagle, the Wizard of the South — rival of John Henry Anderson, Wizard of the North—asks the printer to secure the Town Hall, composing a letter so eminently logical that the document (if in his own hand) rebuts Anderson's accusation of Eagle's illiteracy. Another showman asks Proctor "to oblige me by calling at the Druggist Shop — I don't know the name — it is a little higher up the street on the opposite side to you . . . Please purchase six llb. of Chlorate of Pottash [sic] & send off to me first train — and I will remit you the amount."

Here is an undated midcentury letter from the conjurer Powis Royale, in full: <sup>5</sup>

Dear Sir

Be kind enough to arrange for Wednesday and Thursday if the Town Hall is not engaged for Thursday, if it is, for Wednesday only. I herewith enclose a copy of bill. the posters and block you will get on Saturday Morning from Stockton. So get the bills ready for the block so that they can be posted and distributed on Saturday afternoon, the time will be short enough to give publicity to the affair — enclose bills in envelopes to all the principal families and let the bill sticker deliver them on Monday at the latest. the posters must be posted with a day bill on each side of them, and as many may be posted singly as convenient. should you require tickets before I arrive — you can write

5. Letters quoted are from the author's collection. For more on the relationship of printers to performers, see Robert Wood's *Victorian Delights* (London, 1967), which reproduces the Royle letter; and his *Entertainments 1800-1900* (London, 1971). For important information on Robert Wood, see Allen Berlinski's charming *Purvis: The Newcastle Conjuror* (Northville, Mich., 1981), which piqued my interest in the subject of printing and performance. One image that I find haunting is Wood's account of his initial look at filth-encrusted posters and letters preserved on a spike file no less than five feet high. Wood implies that the midcentury expectation that printers should provide these services already constituted a change in the way such shows were presented: "The intimate and friendly atmosphere of the old troupers disappeared."



them, signing your own name to them, let me know per return of the posters respecting Wednesday evening — your attention will oblige

Yours obtly [obediently]

Powis Royle

Among the techniques used to provoke public curiosity was a document made to resemble an official "Writ of Enquiry." On close examination, however, it is revealed as a bit of puffery, here for the magician "Buck, 'of European Fame,' whose legerdemain, as pronounced by the Leading Journals of England, is unsurpassed in the Memory of Man." It is witnessed by "Vento Passo; Tempus Fugit, Nil Desperandum, and Jeggory Mento." More deceptive publicity employed the names, or rather the identities, of the performers themselves. This might involve a minor distortion — for example, placing the name of a famous act such as the Davenports in prominent display type; in very small print would appear the name of an act that claimed to duplicate the stunts of the Davenports, exposed the material of the Davenports, or featured the performance of a relative whose brother's sister-in-law knew one of the Davenports. Far more egregious was the appropriation of a performer's identity. Signor Blitz and Bartelomeo Bosco were among the most imitated. In this exhibition, Robert-Houdin, the Frenchman considered the "Father of Modern Magic," is represented by both an actual advertisement and a playbill that is a blatant attempt to capitalize on his fame. It heralds a performance in Boston by Robert-Houdin and his daughter Caroline. Robert-Houdin had no such daughter, nor did he ever appear in America.

There was a fine line between usurpation and imitation, in both the publicity and the performance itself. Perhaps the most notorious usurper is described in the memoirs of the magician and showman David Prince Miller. Graham, the perpetrator, was an East-End Londoner who assumed the identities of the most famous conjurers of the day, John Henry Anderson, Robert-Houdin, Robin and Phillipe. He specialized in foreign magicians who, as they achieved success in London, provoked Graham's impersonation, which he presented in the provinces. Said to be most comical was Graham's attempt to mimic accents. He would attempt to speak in foreign-flavored broken English, but "a practiced ear could have detected a strong sprinkling

of the vocabulary of Petticoat Lane.” As for his performance, Miller remarks, “his ability in the conjuring line is moderate in the extreme.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps a certain flexibility about identity was to be expected from masters of imposture, and this theme carried over into an important journalistic genre. Throughout the century, political cartoons represented newsworthy individuals not only as magicians — that is, generic impostors — but also as specific well-known conjurers. Heads of state were typically portrayed bamboozling their subjects or citizens. By far the most prevalent image depicted the conjurer performing the venerable cups-and-balls effect, or its close cousin, using a thimble or a walnut shell and pea. Even today it is not uncommon to find cartoons of politicians engaged in the old shell game.

At mid-century the playbill was still the major advertisement for the conjuring performance. The more elaborate display-faces of this period provided decoration, often set off within ornamental borders. Larger wood blocks were used, frequently in combination with letterpress printing. John Henry Anderson, who was called by Houdini the greatest promoter in the history of magic, was a pioneer of ephemeral advertising. His bills contained the three essential elements: florid language, ornate type, and copious illustrations. Printed conundrum contests were used by John Henry Anderson to attract an audience. Patrons were promised prizes for composing clever verbal puzzles, the winners to be announced on stage. In addition, the entries were recorded in a pamphlet that could be obtained, for an additional fee of course, in the theater lobby at the end of the performance. The spectators, eager to see their names in print, responded favorably.

The Harvard Theatre Collection has many samples of Anderson’s work, among which is a “Blow Book,” a magic book in which illustrations seem to appear and vanish at the performer’s behest.<sup>7</sup> Anderson’s rendition of course included a picture of himself among the images, and he sold these books at his performances. But he was not particular about the medium of self-representation; he even had likeness impressed into pats of butter served at local eateries.

6. David Prince Miller, *The Life of a Showman* (London, 1849), pp. 184-86.

7. See my *Magic Magic* book (in this exhibition) for a history of the blow book.

Photographs of prominent conjurers were used for publicity but also purchased as mementos by enthusiastic fans. Firms often kept a stock of these pictures on hand. In 1878 the Bradely and Rulofson's *Celebrity Catalog* listed likenesses of the magicians S. S. Baldwin, Carl Bosco, Cazeneuve, Robert Heller, Prof. Herrmann and his wife Adelaide Scarsey, Harry Kellar, and a host of now unrecognizable practitioners of the mystical arts.<sup>8</sup> The Ledger Company in Philadelphia issued sample books to display the enormous variety of designs at its disposal. The small bill of the magician Robert Nickle, here included, was printed from this source.

The use of color in show advertising become prevalent at this time. Anderson used color woodblocks, and occasionally lithographs as well, but this technique, although invented at the end of the eighteenth century, did not become the most prominent medium until after the Scotsman retired. Striking examples of the color woodblock technique, a stock image of levitation printed by Stafford in Nottingham, and an earlier mystical scene called "The Phenomena," printed by Miller in London, have been selected for the exhibition.

The use of lithographic crayon on Bavarian limestone produced the perfect vehicle for portraits of the stately yet mysterious figures of magicians. The portraits were often surrounded with vignettes of the performer's pet illusions. This exhibition features work of some of the most important exponents of the medium during the nineteenth century: Seer and Thomas in New York, Forbes in Boston, and of course Strobridge in Cincinnati, usually considered the greatest of America's lithographers.

The texture, color, and size of these lithographs could be incrementally impressive. Using multiple sheets (a one-sheet poster measured approximately twenty-eight by forty inches), a printer could create images on a daunting scale. Around 1878 the first sixteen-sheet poster, the scene of "Eliza Crossing the Ice" from the theatrical production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was produced by Strobridge. It was probably rendered by the lauded poster artist Matt Morgan (whose portrait of Herrmann the Great is featured here). It was so riveting that it literally stopped traffic at Fountain Square in Cincinnati, and extra police had to be summoned to contain the crowd. The modern

8. *Bradely and Rulofson's Celebrity Catalog* (San Francisco, 1878), p. 42.



highway billboard is derived from the twenty-four sheet lithograph. The largest poster produced by Strobridge was made for the circus of W. W. Cole. It consisted of one hundred sheets; mounted, it measured one hundred feet in length and fifteen feet in height.<sup>9</sup>

Stock posters, generic subjects with an area left blank for performers to add their names, were earmarked for entertainers who were unable to afford customized advertising. They are important not only because of what they tell us about printing but also as a record of the kinds of magic effects included in the repertoires of many magicians. (A nineteenth-century Stafford catalog, for example, features posters of dark seances, ghost illusions, aerial suspension, a woman on a swing with the lower half of her body invisible, flowers produced from a top hat, a magician's body penetrated by a sword, automaton marksmen, a mechanical peacock that found a selected card, and a woman conjurer producing eggs, pigeons, flags, and even baby linen — but with her face largely concealed by a head dress of embroidered lace).<sup>10</sup>

The usurpation of names and identities continued--perhaps aided and abetted by the wide use of stock images. But even idiosyncratic depictions were taken outright, as in the case of a minor character called Dale, who copied the lithograph of Robert Heller, an accomplished magician, pianist, and humorist, and a genuine star of the American magic scene. In the 1890s the Donaldson company actually encouraged the alteration of its posters printed for a specific client but noted that they had permission to so proceed: "We have six stock lithographs of magicians' paper, but acting under instructions from Mr. Jack Curry, we offer for sale the entire line of superb paper recently gotten out by him for Zanzic. The paper is for sale as it is, without stripping or dating, but is easily rendered available for use by anyone."<sup>11</sup>

America was certainly the leader in the production of vast quantities of paper for circuses and variety showmen, but there were also great printers of this kind on the Continent. Nonetheless, the first

9. John W. Merten, "Stone by Stone along a Hundred Years with the House of Strobridge," *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, vol. 8 no. 1 (1950), pp. 28-30.

10. *Stafford & Co.'s Descriptive Price List of Pictorial and Letterpress Posters* (Netherfield, England, hand-dated 1892), pp. 38-43.

American magazine of magic, *Mahatma*, proclaimed chauvinistically: "Chavalier [Ernest] Thorn is the first magician in Europe making an extensive use of colored lithographs for advertising. His posters are very artistic and catchy, but they do not compare with the work of the American lithographic artists who must be conceded the palm for pictorial posters."<sup>12</sup> Lithographers, like earlier printers, were often involved in convoluted business dealings with the artists they portrayed. When large bills went unpaid, lithographers would wind up owning, often to their consternation, herds of elephants, magic shows, and even entire circuses.

Posters from the heyday of lithography — usually said to be between 1875 and 1925 — are eagerly sought by collectors. Because they were often the result of a collaborative process by which one artist might provide the portrait, another the illustrations of animals, a third the decorative borders, and a fourth distinctive lettering, critics often devalued the work. A product, they might say, of craftsmen under the direction of no particular artistic sensibility. This process of collaboration, however, has been well-established in other media without compromising their reputations. Beautiful early books, for example, could include the distinct contributions of the printer, the illuminator, and the rubricator; and even master paintings often featured the work of multiple well-known artists.<sup>13</sup>

Entire walls were papered with multiple posters, in various sizes, of a particular illusionist. These displays, called stands, were created to arrest the attention of potential patrons strolling along the street. They were designed to call out to the public almost in the way a street performer could accost a passerby. Three major themes were used: the

11. *Mahatma*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1895), p. 6.

12. *Mahatma*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1895), p. 7.

13. An early modern example was recently exhibited in "A Collector's Cabinet" at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. A seminal work in the exhibit, *The Archduchess Isabella in a Collector's Cabinet*, is attributed to Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625), with the possible collaborators including the figure painter Adriaen Stalbeem; Hieronymus Franken II, who was thought to have done the overall layout and painted the dog; Frans Franken the younger, who may have painted the visitors to the gallery, and Brueghel himself, or possibly an associate of his, who may have depicted the nobility, the flowers, and the fruit and a monkey. See Albert K. Wheelock Jr., *A Collector's Cabinet*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art (1998), pp. 15, 60.



magician could be presented as figure of stately, almost regal, appearance; a sample of the marvelous offerings from his show could be represented; or the performer's association with occult or diabolic forces was imputed by the display of imps, gnomes, or devils. Often these were perched on the shoulders of magicians, whispering to each other, or silently observing the master as he strolled through the woods. Sometimes the magician was shown conquering them: shooting down an infernal hot-air machine, or besting the devil in a game of poker.

The Herrmann family concludes this exhibition for a number of reasons. Their success and fame spanned the entire nineteenth century, even extending into the twentieth, and the Harvard Theatre Collection houses some stunning and even unique pieces of their advertising materials. The name of Herrmann became synonymous with magic itself. The patriarch, Samuel, was a doctor and itinerant magician at the time of Napoleon. His eldest son Compars, born in 1816, was one of the most respected and important conjurers of his day. Known as Carl, he was immortalized in sheet music written for his performance by Johann Strauss. The youngest son Alexander, born in 1844, became the most famous magician in America. A major star, he had a mansion in Long Island, his own railroad car, and a personal yacht. He was both a brilliant success and a beloved figure in American entertainment. His skill at his chosen profession, his stately bearing, and his expansive personality and good humor were all keys to his success. Ironically, however, it is the image embedded into the public consciousness by countless publicity pieces and splendid posters by which he is remembered. With his resplendent mustache and goatee, Hermann the Great became and remains the stereotypical image of the quintessential mystifier.

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# The Imagery of Illusion

## Nineteenth Century Magic and Deception In the Harvard Theatre Collection

### Early Showmen and Their Venues

Early in the century conjurers appeared at fairgrounds, common rooms, town halls, and occasionally in theaters. In this period their shows were small and their advertisements subtle.

Ivan Ivanitz Chabert.

Color print. Frontispiece from *Fairburn's New London Conjurer* (London, ca. 1818).

"Monsieur Chabert the Fire King." Fairburn's show, featuring Chabert, Breslaw, and Gygell. Oblong, 11-3/4 by 6-7/8 inches. HTC 6,945.

Mr. Ingleby.

Printed bill. Newcastle, Concert Room, Bigg-Market, Tuesday, February 15, 1814.

"Extraordinary combinations of Mathematical and Philosophical Recreations." Not illustrated. 8 by 18 inches. HTC 5,478.

Magicians of the period often couched their illusions under the rubric of scientific recreations.

Bartholomew Fair.

Engraving published by J. F. Setchel, Covent Garden, London.

"Bartholomew Fair, 1721." Engraving for a fan. Oblong, 13 by 22-7/8 inches. HTC 5,432.

This misdated glimpse of the fair was published by J. Setchel in 1824. It features the most famous conjurer of the day, Isaac Fawkes.

Billy Purvis.

Printed bill. Dublin, The Assembly Room at the Queen's Head Inn. Commencing Monday, February 20, 1832.

"Liliputian Theatre, or Superb Mechanical Figures." 7-1/8 by 20 inches. HTC 6,946. The Marion Hannah Winter Collection.

## Brook Green Fair.

Printed poster, colored aquatint after J. Gearing, ca. 1815.

"Brook Green Fair near Hammersmith, held Annually by Charter, on the First, Second & Third of May." The illustration shows wide view of fairgrounds with food stalls in the foreground and stages labeled "Moritz," "Richardson," and "Scowton" at the back. Oblong, 13-7/8 by 19-5/8 inches. HTC 6,938. The F. E. Chase Fund, 1976.

## Mr. Gyngell.

Printed bill. Theatre of Arts, no city or date given.

"The Eclipse of all Conjurers." 9 by 11-1/8 inches. HTC 5,474. The Gift of Ernest L. Gay, 1903.

Watercolor of Gyngell's booth, from an extra-illustrated copy of Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (London, 1859). HTC TS 973.8. The Gift of Robert Gould Shaw, 1915.

Gyngell was a multi-talented performer who ran many a fairground booth.

See also the section of the exhibition called "Early Showmen and Their Venues."

## Learned Animals

The exhibition of learned animals, frequently presented by magicians, was site-dependent (an exterior venue being preferable). A variety of farm animals were educated, horses and dogs being the most common. Animals famous for their intractability were also popular, hence the success of the pig, goose, or goat. Included for your delectation are a porker so popular he was immortalized in a pamphlet heralding his exploits, *Bismarck, the Pig of Genius, His Life and Labors — His Wonderful Education and How He Got It* (Philadelphia, 1871), and an oil painting by Paul Bürde featuring the considerable achievements in orthography of a goat in the ballet *La Esmeralda*.

## Professor Fabian.

Printed bill. Boston, Burnell's Museum, Menagerie and Theatrum, 511 Washington Street, Monday, December 7, 1874.

"Professor Fabian, The Distinguished Magician." With ten woodcut



illustrations comprising one effect (a dove being drawn from a hat), eight views of the troupe of trained canaries, and "Bismarck," the educated pig. 9-1/4 by 24 inches. HTC 5,428.

### "La Esmeralda."

Fanny Cerrito as La Esmeralda in the ballet based on Victor Hugo's novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Oil on canvas, attributed to Paul Bürde (1819-1874), ca. 1847.

The learned pet goat is able to spell out the name of Esmeralda's beloved, "Phoebus." 14 by 18 inches. HTC 6,950. The Beatrice, Benjamin, and Richard Bader in the Visual Arts of the Theatre, 1997.

Same. Lithograph print by C. Mittas, printed by L. Sachse and Co., Berlin.

"Fanny Cerrito als Esmeralda." Print based on the painting by Paul Bürde, described above. 14-3/8 by 20-1/2 inches. HTC 6,942. The Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd.

### Signor Blitz.

Printed bill. Brittingham Hall, no city given, commencing Thursday, April 18, no year given.

"Cosmopolitan Monarch of Magicians, Illusionists, Physicists and Ventriloquists ..." With five small woodcut illustrations showing the troupe of learned canaries. Printed in black with an orange-red background. 8-1/4 by 23-1/2 inches. HTC 5,404.

Blitz was one of the most versatile and most imitated of conjurers of the period. No fewer than thirteen other performers, he wrote, were using his name – an odd testament to his prowess as a conjurer.

## Cups and Balls

The earliest recorded sleight of hand trick was the subject of numerous artistic representations. The performance of this venerable illusion was adaptable to intimate settings, the street, and the theater. In the nineteenth century a performer's skill could literally be assessed from his expertise with this single effect.

### *Les Jongleurs Indiens.*

Hand-colored engraving. *Le bon genre*, no. 88.

This print is from the famous French fashion series, *Le bon genre*, published in Paris early in the nineteenth century. Troupes of



Indian conjurers first appeared in Europe in 1815. They featured exotic skills like sword-swallowing, and of course the universally appealing cups and balls.

### "Zykes the Showman"

Lithograph poster by Rothengatter, printed by Metropolitan Printing Co., New York, no date given (ca. 1875).

"John Thompson in Zykes the Showman." "Zykes and His Show." "World on Wheels." Printed in black ink with light blue and tan fill. Oblong, 19-1/8 by 24-1/8 inches. HTC 5,421.

While Zykes has been discussed as an actual conjurer, the overprinting on this poster reveals that he is actually a fictional creation in a theatrical show which featured a magic performance. The cups and balls are prominently displayed on his table of apparatus.

The play, written by J. Holmes Grover, came to New York at the end of August, 1875. John Thompson was listed in the playbills as Nat Zykes, "engaged with a travelling show, as Musician, Vocalist, Dancer, and Magician."

### Chinese Artists and Jugglers.

Printed bill. Boston, Howard Athenæum, Thursday, April 24, 1856.

With a woodcut illustration showing an oriental knife-thrower together with Masonic emblems. Green paper. 6 by 18-5/8 inches. HTC 5,465.

## Automata

Marvelous moving mechanical figures were created and exhibited by conjurers, often as their featured presentations. Robert-Houdin's celebrated orange tree and John Nevil Maskelyne's "Psycho" were among the most popular automata.

### Maskelyne & Cooke.

Printed handbill, 4 pages. London, Egyptian Hall, no date given.

"Messrs Maskelyne and Cooke the Royal Illusionists and Antispiritualists.... Fourth Year in London." With a lithograph cover design by Pilotell, incorporating portraits, supernatural creatures, and effects. Printed in purple and black. 6 by 9-5/8 inches. HTC 5,457.

Printed handbill, 8 pages. London, Egyptian Hall, hand-dated 1885.

"The Royal Illusionists and Anti-Spiritualists." With lithograph illustrations on interior pages. 6 by 10 inches. HTC 5,456.

"Psycho" and "Zoe" were two of Maskelyne's most popular creations.

Printed handbill, 8 pages. London, Egyptian Hall, no date given.

"England's Home of Mystery." Elaborate cover design incorporating a Sphinx, two obelisks, and other Egyptian icons. 6 by 9-5/8 inches. HTC 5,457.

Maskelyne and Cooke were the lessees of the Egyptian Hall for a remarkable run from 1873 through 1904. This venue became *the* spot for witnessing magic in London.

Henri Denier.

Printed bill. Charlottetown, Temperance Hall, Tuesday–Wednesday, August 15–16, no year given.

"Henri Denier of the Celebrated Denier Brothers." Not illustrated. 6-1/8 by 15-1/8 inches. HTC 6,934.

## Ghosts and Spectres

As the century began, an enterprising entertainment featured the projected magic lantern images of ghosts, spirits, and even political figures from the French Revolution. Phantasmagoria, long thought to be the creation of a Belgian who performed under the name of Etienne Gaspart Robertson, was earlier exhibited by a German showman who worked under the names of Philidor and Philipsthal. Among the many versions of the show was the one presented by Bologna. In 1848 the modern religion of Spiritualism commenced with the mysterious "raps" communicated through the so-called mediumship of Margaret and Kate Fox. Shortly thereafter, seances were conducted both privately and as stage entertainments. The Davenport Brothers, of Buffalo, New York, were the leading exponents of this phenomenon, and often imitated.

In 1862, a stunning magic illusion that featured the interplay between live actors and projected specters was debuted at the Royal Polythenic Institution in London. A collaboration of John Henry Pepper (who provided the staging) and Henry Dircks (who invented the technique), it became known (to Dircks's dismay) as "Pepper's Ghost." The illusion became a mainstay of not only conjuring, but

dramatic theatrical production as well.

### Mr. Bologna, Jun.

Printed bill. London, Lower Theatre, Lyceum, Strand, hand dated 1808.

"New Performances. Pantascopia, Ergascopia, Phantasmagoria, and Hydraulics." With a dramatic woodcut illustration of a ghost arising from a fiery cauldron, surrounded by demons. 9-7/8 by 28-5/8 inches. HTC 5,401.

The Ergascopia, a variation of Phantasmagoria, was mentioned by Schirmer and Scholl as early as 1805. Bologna was one of the great Harlequins of pantomime; a multi-talented performer who also won acclaim as a conjurer and exhibitor of automata, his later life was rife with hardships. He is said to have ended his career in the 1840's as a black-faced clown to John Henry Anderson.

### "The Phenomena."

Poster, color woodcut. Overprinted London, Lyric Hall. Hand dated, November 17, 1843.

"The Largest Illusory Apparatus in the world!" Illustration shows a flying (or levitating) woman, devil-like figures, mermaids, a skeleton, and other fantastical images. Printed by Hugh S. Miller, London. 17-1/2 by 22-1/8 inches. HTC 5,402.

### The Davenport Brothers.

Poster, with color woodcut illustration. Broadstairs, England, Willard and Ring's, Assembly Rooms, no year given.

"Light and Dark Seances, Introducing Floating Instruments, Spirit Hands, Spirit Rapping, Mysterious Bell-Ringing, and other indescribable phenomena. The Brothers Davenport and imitators of the same, completely eclipsed without the aid of a cabinet." Printed in red and green ink. 14 by 20 inches. HTC 5,412. The Bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell, Harvard class of 1882.

The Davenports, listed on this playbill, have nothing to do with the show. It is a blatant attempt to mislead a potential audience.

### The Thorpe Brothers.

Printed bill. New York, Niblo's Saloon, commencing Monday, October 3, 1864.

"Startling Wonders! Astounding Manifestations. Utterly Incomprehensible and Mysterious." With woodcut illustration captioned "The Brothers under the influence of the mysterious power."

6 by 18-1/4 inches. HTC 5,454.

The Thorpe Brothers were truly under the influence of the Davenportes.

### Pepper and Tobin.

Printed program. London, Egyptian Hall, no date given.

The New & the Wonderful Professor Pepper. Always at the Egyptian Hall." "Professor J. H. Pepper and Thos. Wm. Tobin." 4 pages, printed in red and black.

### Pepper's Ghost.

"The Corsican Brothers Quadrille," by R. M. Levey. Sheet music published by Henry Russell, Dublin, no date given.

"The Corsican Brothers Quadrille, to which is added The Ghost Melody, As Performed at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, by R. M. Levey." Lithograph cover by Forster & Co., showing the Pepper's Ghost illusion that followed the duel scene. Oblong, 9-3/4 by 13 inches. HTC 6,900. The Gift of James Ellis, 1996.

### "Phantasmagoria."

James Lind. Autograph letter to Tiberio Cavallo. Written from Windsor, December 1, 1805.

4 pages on a single sheet. With an ink drawing at the foot of the second page. The third page of the letter contains two diagrams, one a cutout, with shapes outlined by thread fastened with sealing-wax. 13-1/4 by 16-1/4 inches open. HTC 6,949.

This letter, written to the author of *The Elements of Natural and Experimental Society*, contains much technical detail about the projection of ghostly images. "It is done almost without any expense, no glasses, no mirrors, no paintings being required. A few Candles or small Lamps, and a bit of *cuttout* [*sic*] *paper* are almost the only requisites, and yet the effect is pleasing."

## Blow Books

Conjuring books in which images seem to vanish and appear almost at will, these trick books have been described in detail since the sixteenth century, and are produced and performed today much as they were then.



Professor Anderson's Magic Picture Gallery.

Inscribed copy, "Presented to Billy Binck, Esq, by John Henry Anderson 'Great Wizard of the North,' as a Mark of his Respect for a Great Brother Artist. San Francisco, 28th December 1859." The color illustrations are of single figures, and include a ballerina, a harlequin, a sailor, a jester, and Anderson himself, both as a magician and as "Rob Roy." 8-1/2 by 10-1/2 inches. HTC 5,499.

"Bilder-Zaubere," Germany, ca. 1890.

Small red book with cover illustration of a white-bearded magician wearing a pointed hat; illustrations inside include silhouettes, music and typefaces in black and white, and people, animals, and fairy-tale illustrations in color. 2-3/4 by 5-3/8 inches. HTC 6,901.

Robert Nickle.

Printed ticket. New York, Botanic Hall, 68 East Broadway, Friday, September 14, 1886.

"Complimentary Benefit tendered to Robert Nickle, Prestidigitateur." Oblong, 2-5/8 by 3-3/8 inches. HTC 5,439.

Printed handbill. Cape May, New Jersey, Columbia House, August 1, no year given.

"Robert Nickle! The World's Prestidigitateur!" Lithograph cartouche incorporating several supernatural creatures as well as various effects. Printed in red and black. With an acrostic poem. Venue and date added by hand. Folded to 6 by 9 inches. HTC 5,438.

Nickle performed, produced, sold, and was pictured in his own blow book, entitled *The Great Now You See It Now You Don't Magic Album*.

## Stealing Names and Stealing Images

The appropriation of magicians' identities, illusions, and images has always been the bane of the conjurer's profession.

Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin.

Printed double bill. Manchester, Theatre Royal, commencing Monday, August 28, 1848.

"Houdin's Fantastiques." "The Celebrated Robert Houdin from the St. James's Theatre, London." With "Opinions of the Manchester Press" on the left hand side of the double-column playbill. 20 by 20 inches. HTC 6,948.



## Robert Houdin.

Printed bill. Boston, Gothic Hall, Friday, January 19, 1866.

Assisted by his daughter Caroline. Not illustrated. 5-1/8 by 14-1/2 inches. HTC 5,477.

This unknown performer tries to take advantage of the fame of the real Robert-Houdin by appropriating his name.

## Herr Alexander.

Printed bill. Philadelphia, Walnut Street Theatre, commencing Monday, August 13, 1849.

With a woodcut illustration showing a "Magic Shawl" effect. 9-7/8 by 18-5/8 inches. HTC 5,453.

This bill features the popular German showman Alexander Heimbürger. His successful American tour included a performance for President Polk.

## Mr. Alexander.

Printed bill. Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Theatre, Monday, December 21, no year given.

"(Not Herr Alexander) but the unrivalled young American Magician lately arrived from Paris. Extraordinary & Unprecedented Exhibition of splendid and surprising feats of Magic! Never before Exhibited in the United States." With a woodcut illustration in an illusion identified as the "Magic Vase of Gold Fish." 7-3/8 by 24-1/8 inches. HTC 6,947.

Alexander, in a refreshing display of integrity, chose not to take advantage of the fame of his better-established German rival, and thereby karmically merits inclusion in this exhibition.

## Mr. G. Henri.

Printed bill on satin. Shanghai, Theatre Royal, commencing Monday, April 6, 1863.

"Grand Fashionable Night. First appearance of Mr. G. Henri as Wizard of the East." Not illustrated, but with elaborate typography. 7-5/8 by 17-1/4 inches. HTC 5,463.

Henri, as "The Wizard of the East," is a reminder of Anderson imitators from every compass point. Playbills were occasionally printed on silk or satin for benefit shows or special occasions. The bill is shared with Fred Wilson, a well-known black-face comedian and entertainer.

## Robert Heller

Poster printed by Armstrong and Co., Boston, and Riverside Press, Cambridge.

"Heller's Wonders. Miracles. Diablerie." A central portrait of Heller surrounded by six vignettes illustrating his effects. 18-3/8 by 23 inches. HTC 5,424.

Heller was so highly skilled he could have had success with any of his three chosen areas of performance – magic, humor, or playing the piano.

Cabinet photograph.

Inscribed on reverse, "Shakespeare wrote well / Dickens wrote Weller / All Magicians are H—I – / But the Greatest is HELLER." Heller is shown with a harlequin automaton, both smoking. 4-1/4 by 6 inches. HTC 5,489.

Cabinet photograph by Bradley & Rulofson, San Francisco.

Printed inscription: "Robert Heller, Conjurer, Pianist, Humorist." Bust portrait with subject looking down and to the viewer's left. 4-1/4 by 6.5 inches. HTC 5,494.E. J. Dale.

Lithograph poster.

"Mystic Wonders." Central bust portrait surrounded by six vignette scenes. 15-3/8 by 20-1/2 inches. HTC 6,925.

This design is taken directly from the preceding poster of Robert Heller.

## Madame Bosco.

Printed bill. Cork, Theatre Royal, Cook-Street, commencing Thursday, May 6, no year given.

"The great and only Female Magician in the World. Grand Drawing-Room Entertainment!" Not illustrated, but with extravagant typography. 9-3/4 by 19-5/8 inches. HTC 5,466.

The original Bartolomeo Bosco, an Italian magician celebrated for his performance of the classic Cups and Balls, was so well known and so frequently imitated that his name became almost synonymous with conjuring. Madame Bosco seems to be one of many who capitalized on his fame.

## Professor Buck.

Printed bill. Liverpool, no venue or date given, ca. 1851.

"Professor Buck! The Great Wizard of the World!" The bill mentions an "Exhibition Bottle of 1851." 9-7/8 by 30 inches. HTC 5,413.

Both Buck and his son — who toured under the name of Smith of Bristol — assumed numerous identities. Here Buck uses a variation of Anderson's billing by calling himself "The Great Wizard of the World."

*See also elsewhere in the exhibition: Signor Blitz, Printed playbill.*

## Advertising Schemes

In the incredibly competitive world of show business, countless plans, gimmicks, contests, and giveaways were concocted in an attempt to fill theaters. The "Gift Show," in which an assortment of prizes were given to various members of the audience, were presented by well-known magicians like "The Fakir of Ava," Macallister, Wyman, Hartz, and a host of lesser lights.

### I. Harris Hughes ("The Fakir of Ava").

Printed bill. Boston, Association Hall, commencing Monday, September 28, no year given.

"... the great original and well-known Fakir of Ava the wonderful presitidigateur, The most Skilful, Astonishing and Pleasing Performer of Prestidigitation and Legerdemain." With an oval portrait woodcut illustration and several woodcut vignettes of J. W. Whiston, with whom Hughes shared the bill. Printed on pink paper. 9-1/8 by 23-3/4 inches. HTC 5,415.

Harry Kellar first learned his craft as an assistant to Hughes.

### Professor John Henry Anderson.

Printed bill. Boston, Tremont Temple, no date given.

"Exciting Event! Profes'r Anderson's Great Conundrum Contest!" Not illustrated. 7-3/8 by 21-1/4 inches. HTC 5,447.

### Ashley.

Printed bill. Arlington, Massachusetts, Town Hall, commencing Thursday, October 1, 1868.

"Rufus Somerby & Co.'s Colossal Gift Entertainment!" "Ashley! The Escamateur, Wizard and Ventriloquist, will exhibit A Cataclysm of Wonders!" With a large woodcut illustration showing an elaborately furnished chamber with apparatus. 9-3/8 by 25-3/4 inches. HTC 5,420.

## Professor Buck.

Printed handbill. Manchester Exchange, Ducie Street, no date given.

"Writ of Inquiry." "We command yourselves collectively and in Persons, in Company with as many of your Friends as you can congregate in Custody safe ... to put in immediate appearance at our Royal Emporium of 'Nature's Magic.'" HTC 6,951. Oblong, 5 by 10-1/8 inches.

## John Henry Anderson

At the height of his fame, this Scots mystifier was the most famous conjurer in the English-speaking world. His skill as a publicist and promoter almost certainly eclipsed his talent as a performer, but he left a rich legacy of magic memorabilia.

John Henry Anderson ("Professor Anderson," "The Great Wizard of the North").

Printed bill. Balmoral, New Royal Balmoral Marquee, no date given, ca. 1849.

"Professor Anderson's Royal Balmoral Entertainment." With one woodcut illustration of a suspension effect. Details are given of "The Royal Programme" as performed by Queen Victoria's command, at Balmoral Castle, on Monday, August 27, 1849. 10 by 29-1/2 inches. HTC 5,403.

Anderson's chloroform suspension was a specific departure from the ether-based illusion of his more talented rival, Robert-Houdin.

Printed bill. London, Theatre-Royal, Adelphi, commencing Monday, April 17, 1843.

"Great Wizard of the North. Grand Entertainment of Scientific Magic." With a large woodcut illustration of a severed head illusion and elaborate ornamental alphabets. Printed by John Buurton, Sheffield. 6-3/4 by 29-3/8 inches. HTC 6,930.

"The Mystic Polka." Printed sheet music. New York, 1852.

"The Mystic Polka, Composed expressly for Professor Anderson's Grand Soirées Mystérieuses." Lithograph by Major after a photograph by Napoleon Sarony, "Professor Anderson performing his great feat of the crystal casket." The illustration shows Anderson standing beneath the casket in a forest clearing, with a ring of elves or gnomes dancing around him. 10 by 13 inches. HTC 5,483.



Printed bill. London, Theatre Royal, Adelphi, no date given.

"Third Appearance in the Metropolis of the Greatest Wonder of this age of Wonders, that Incomprehensible Being, The Great Wizard of the North." With woodcut illustrations along the side borders of magic effects alternating with grotesque figures. 10 by 29-1/2 inches. HTC 6,923.

Printed bill. New York, Astor Place Opera House, no date given.

"Professor Anderson's Farewell Visit to New York! Previous to his Southern Tour."

With a large woodcut illustration, printed sideways, showing the effect "La Filtration." 9 by 22 inches. HTC 5,446.

## Mortal Danger

Risk-taking, life-threatening themes have been a perennial favorite in conjuring. The first recorded magic effect, described in ancient Egypt, featured the decapitation of various animals. The first book in the English language to seriously discuss the subject of conjuring, Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), featured the same illusion with a human subject. In the same century, magicians first tried to make themselves invulnerable by catching bullets fired at them from pistols or rifles.

Patrizio.

Printed bill. San Francisco, San Francisco Minstrels' Opera House.

"Commencing April 29, 1878." 19-1/8 by 24 inches. HTC 6,922.

Patrizio was one of the most famous of a necessarily small group of men who caught fired cannon balls in their bare hands.

John Henry Anderson ("Professor Anderson," "The Great Wizard of the North").

Fragment of a printed bill.

With a large woodcut illustration, printed sideways, showing the effect called "The Invulnerable Boy." Oblong woodcut, 6-3/4 by 8-1/4 inches. HTC 5,449.

Many conjurers died trying to perform versions of this effect, the most famous of them, Chung Ling Soo, met his death at the Wood Green Empire Theatre, on March 23, 1918.

## Signor Cavanenghi.

Printed bill. New York, Germania Assembly Rooms, 291 and 293 Bowery, near Houston Street, Sunday, February 11, 1877.

"Wonderful Variety Entertainment & Ball will be given by the Scientifical Club.... Signor Cavanenghi, this human wonder, possessed with almost unnatural capacity, and having been pronounced, recognized and named The King of Necromancers, will appear this evening in a most wonderful and astonishing performance, when He Will Eat a Live Man.... Spiritualism Exposed!" With a woodcut illustration of a minstrel troupe scene. 10-1/2 by 28-1/8 inches. HTC 5,430.

One of the legendary, if unperformed, illusions, was eating a man alive. When and if a volunteer could be persuaded to come on stage, he would run back to his seat or out of the theater as the magician took the first bite of his flesh.

## Dr. H. S. Lynn.

"G. B. Bunnell's Advance Advocate." Printed advertising brochure for Middletown, Connecticut, McDonough Hall, Thursday-Friday, March 2-3, no year given.

"Dr. H. S. Lynn of London England Does It!" 8 pages. Full-page woodcut illustrating amputation and decapitation effects. 9-7/8 by 12 inches. HTC 6,931.

Lynn's "Palignesia," a comically frightening vivisection, was his staple effect performed over a long career.

## Professor Guertin.

Printed handbill. Boston, 311 Washington Street, June, hand-dated 1871.

"Wonders of the Art of Magic. The Most Extraordinary Man of the Age!" With a woodcut illustration depicting "Guertin's Decapitation!" 6-5/8 by 9-3/4 inches. HTC 5,475.

## Variety Performance

It was not uncommon for practitioners of magic to exhibit scientific apparatus or moving mechanical marvels called automata. Many also doubled in the allied arts of juggling and ventriloquism. John Nevil Maskelyne, the founder of a dynasty of performers and the leading magician at the turn of the century, was well known for spinning dinner plates, and for creating intriguing automata. He was also an

inventor of marvelous illusions.

#### Mr. Jacobs.

Printed bill. Hull, Theatre-Royal, Friday, July 11, 1845.

"The Great Magician, Royal Ventriloquist, & Professor of Natural Philosophy." With woodcut illustrations along the borders, each captioned with an appropriate adjective. Copy owned and annotated by Evanion. 8-3/4 by 21-5/8 inches. HTC 5,462.

Jacobs was a prominent performer, and, like many other magicians, an excellent ventriloquist as well.

#### Mr. Newman.

Printed bill, Chertsey, Town Hall, Monday, overprinted April 13, 1874.

Woodcut illustration of "Mr. Evanion's Extraordinary Flag Illusion." 12-1/2 by 20-1/8 inches. HTC 6,941. Copy annotated by Evanion. The Bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell, Harvard class of 1882.

#### The Lubin Brothers (Frederick and Jerome Lubin).

Lithograph by Sarony, Major and Knapp, New York, after a photograph by Fredericks.

Full-length portrait, both brothers wearing dark suits with white waistcoats and black ties. Apparatus, consisting largely silver ornaments. 5-3/8 by 20-7/8 inches. HTC 5,427. The Bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell, Harvard class of 1882.

In addition to conjuring, the Lubins performed as lecturers, humorists, and ventriloquists.

Printed bill. New York, Palace Gardens, Fourteenth Street near Sixth Avenue, no date given.

"Grand Soirees Philosophique! Frederick & Jerome Lubin, The Renowned Lecturers, Humorists and Ventriloquists." With six woodcut illustrations illustrating their effects. 9-1/2 by 21 inches. HTC 5,459.

#### Chinese Artists and Jugglers.

Printed bill. New York, Broadway Theatre, Monday, January 31, 1853.

"Second Appearance in New York of the Famous Chinese Magicians & Actors." With a woodcut illustration showing a Chinese knife-thrower together with Masonic emblems. Green paper. 6 by 18-5/8 inches. HTC 5,465.

A representative advertisement of Asian performers in the West,

this playbill features an intriguing Masonic symbol.

*See also elsewhere in the exhibition: Maskelyne and Cooke, Printed handbills.*

## Purveyors of Magical Apparatus

Although references to dealers of conjuring apparatus is mentioned in 1584, it is in the nineteenth century that the concept flourished. In this specialized world the most respected purveyors were often those who had first gained fame as performers themselves. Joseph Michael Hartz was a successful and original performer, and his brother Gus was also acclaimed. A third brother, George, was more comfortable behind the counter of the various emporia the operated in Boston and New York. Among the offerings for sale to budding amateur magicians were attractively boxed sets of magic; two examples from the Harvard collection are displayed.

Joseph Michael Hartz ("Professor Hartz").

Lithograph poster printed by W. J. Morgan and Co. Lithographers.

"Again With The Great Hartz Combination. Duncan's Novel Ventriloquial Entertainment." Oblong, 17-7/8 by 23-1/4 inches. HTC 6,933.

Poster printed by W. J. Morgan and Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

"The Magician's Dream." "Professor Hartz." Hartz is pictured asleep in a comfortable chair, while all around him gremlins are tormenting him, performing effects, and taking in the money. 20 by 25-1/8 inches. HTC 5,429.

Lithograph portrait.

"Hartz." Oval portrait with tan fill. 20-1/8 by 26-1/4 inches. HTC 5,423.

## Magic Sets.

"The Little Conjurer." German, mid-nineteenth century.

"Der kleine Zauberer. Il Petit Escamateur. The Little Conjurer. El Pequeño Prestigiator." Small magic set, with an elaborately illustrated box cover. Oblong, 8-1/2 by 12 by 2-3/8 inches. HTC 6,929.

The open box and cover are displayed, together with an instruction booklet and a poster included with the magic set.

H. Rousseau, Paris, ca. 1845.

Large magic set. Hand-colored lithograph on cover by H. Jannin,



Paris, after Bommier. The illustration shows a man using this magic set at a party. Oblong, 13-3/4 by 19-5/8 by 3 inches. The open box and cover are shown.

## The Herrmann Family

The success and fame of the Herrmann family spanned the entire nineteenth century, and their name became synonymous with magic itself. The patriarch, Samuel, was a doctor and itinerant magician at the time of Napoleon. His eldest son, Compars, born in 1816, was one of the most important conjurers of his day. The youngest son, Alexander, born in 1844, became the most famous magician in America. A major star, he had a mansion on Long Island, his own railroad car, and a personal yacht. He was a brilliant success and a beloved figure in American entertainment. With his resplendent mustache and goatee, Herrmann the Great became and remains the stereotypical image of the quintessential mystifier.

Alexander Herrmann ("The Great Herrmann").

Color lithograph poster printed by A. S. Seer, New York.

"I Am Coming." "The Great Herrmann." The illustration pictures Hermann in a horse-drawn coach, being driven by three demons. 19-1/8 by 27-7/8 inches. HTC 6,915.

Lithograph portrait by Matt Morgan. Printed by the Strobridge Lithographic Co., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Three-quarter length portrait, right hand in coat. Sepia. HTC 6,912.

Lithograph poster printed by American Oleograph Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

"The Great Herrmann's Novelty Combination." With seven lithograph vignettes showing Herrmann and six other variety acts. 24-1/4 by 30 inches. HTC 6,911.

Lithograph poster by Joe Gunhouse, printed by Gunhouse and Herwig, New York. Overprinted date, October 24-26, no year given.

A large central portrait surrounded by several scenes of effects. Oblong, 22-5/8 by 27-3/4 inches. HTC 5,408.

Lithograph poster printed by Forbes Co., Boston and New York.

"Herrmann." Central full-length portrait surrounded by scenes depicting several effects and an arch of silhouette figures and playing

cards. Printed in black ink with tan fill. 22-5/8 by 33-1/2 inches. HTC 5,405.

Cabinet photograph by Gilbert & Bacon, Philadelphia.

Bust portrait, wearing a fur coat and a polka-dot bow tie. 4-1/4 by 6-1/2 inches. HTC 5,495.

### Adelaide Hermann.

Cabinet photograph by Halls, New York.

"Adelaide Hermann, Queen of Magic."

Shows subject standing, looking to her left, with another woman kneeling at her feet. 4-1/8 by 6-1/2 inches. HTC 5,496.

Cabinet photograph by Jones & Lotz. San Francisco. Dated in pencil on reverse: "Wallis Theatre, Oct. 3, 1896."

Full-length portrait of subject wearing beaded costume, raising a scarf above her head with both arms and looking up to the right. 4-1/4 by 6-1/2 inches. HTC 5,498.

### Compars Herrmann.

"Hermann Polka & Quadrille," by Strauss. Sheet music published by S. T. Gordon, New York, 1862.

Lithograph cover by J. Queen showing a caricature of Hermann doing a card trick with a small devil-like figure seated on his hat beside him. 10-5/8 by 14 inches. HTC 5,487.

Compars, Alexander's older brother, was a renowned performer. Here he is immortalized in music composed by the "Waltz King."

### Leon Herrmann.

Cabinet photograph by Hall, New York. Signed.

Three-quarter length portrait, subject standing with arms behind his back and looking straight at the camera. 4-1/8 by 6-1/2 inches. HTC 5,490. The Bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell, Harvard class of 1882.

To Adelaide's dismay, Leon began calling himself "Herrmann the Great" after Alexander's death.

### Harry Kellar.

Lithograph portrait printed by H. A. Thomas, New York.

"Kellar." Three-quarter length portrait. 22 by 29-1/8 inches. HTC 6,937.

It was Harry Kellar who became the most prominent conjurer in America when Alexander Herrmann died in 1896.

## Suspensions and Levitations

A magic effect of great antiquity (the first printed reference is in the travels of Ibu Batuta in the fourteenth century) and popularity. It was a specialty of many of the performers featured in this exhibition: Robert-Houdin, Anderson, Maskelyne, and Kellar.

### Harry Kellar.

Lithograph poster printed by H. A. Thomas, New York.

"Kellar's Levitation." "From Stage to Dome Without Mechanical Appliances." 20-1/8 by 30-1/4 inches. HTC 6,943. The Bequest of Evert Jansen Wendell, Harvard class of 1882.

### Le Tort.

Printed bill. Venue and date not given.

"The King of Wizards." With woodcut illustration identified as "The Wonder of the World, Le Tort's Latest Invention. The Aerial Suspension, or Lady Sleeping in Mid-Air!" 10-3/8 by 29 inches. HTC 5,436.

### M. Hartz ("Professor Hartz").

Polka d'Illusion Magique," by Juliet Levy. Sheet music published by William A. Pond and Co., New York, 1866.

"Polka d'Illusion Magique, Compose et dediée a M. Hartz par Juliet Levy."

Color lithograph illustration, by Bufford Brothers, shows Hartz levitating a "Floating Head" on a pillow. 10-1/2 by 13-5/8 inches. HTC 5,482.

### Levitation.

Woodcut poster printed by Stafford and Co., Nottingham.

Printed in black and five colors. A large stock poster without overprinting. 27-3/4 by 39 inches. HTC 5,431. The Bequest of Marion Hannah Winter.

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# The Imagery of Illusion

## The Harvard Theatre Collection

Fredric Woodbridge Wilson, *Curator*.

Ricky Jay, *Exhibition Guest Curator*.

Ellen Doon, Annette Fern, and Heather A. Ahlstrom,  
*Harvard Theatre Collection*.

Sara B. Heller, Elizabeth Greenwood, Brendan Greaves, Alexandra C.  
Budabin, Dennis Feehan, and Katherine Mannheimer,  
*Harvard Theatre Collection Student Assistants*.

Jason Radalin and Jennifer Stiles,  
*Harvard Theatre Collection Graduate Student Assistants*.

Elizabeth A. Morse and Karen Walter,  
*Harvard University Library Preservation Center*.

## The Exhibition

*Concept, Organization, and Design:* Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

*Selection:* Ricky Jay, Fredric Woodbridge Wilson.

*Essay:* Ricky Jay.

*Item Description:* Fredric Woodbridge Wilson.

*Narrative Text:* Ricky Jay, Fredric Woodbridge Wilson.

*Matting and Preparation:* Fredric Woodbridge Wilson, Ellen Doon.

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Aimee Ricciardone, *Sanders Theatre Box Office.*

The Office for the Arts at Harvard and Radcliffe.

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